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Once Again---the Canning Questions

A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, July 16, 1940, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 87 associate radio stations.

WALLACE KADDERLY:

Now for the week's news in home economics. Here's Ruth Van Deman to report action in the laboratories of the Bureau of Home Economics.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

There's plenty of unreported action in home kitchens too these days.

KADDERLY:

Only these days? I thought the kitchen was the hub of the household all the time.

VAN DEMAN:

But things spin around the hub faster at some times than others. This is canning season...time to make jellies, jams, pickles ..... According to the letters women are writing us, they're trying to do an even better job of food conservation this year.

KADDERLY:

That's always good economy for the family that has a surplus of fresh vegetables and fruits in its own garden...or can buy fresh supplies reasonably from a nearby farm.

VAN DEMAN:

Thank you, Wallace, you've answered the first question on my docket. Does it pay to buy fruits and vegetables to can at home?

KADDERLY:

You don't recommend it for city families, do you?

VAN DEMAN:

Not as a usual thing, no. .... Oh, of course there are exceptions, when a city family out for a drive in the country stops at a roadside stand, and gets a bushel of tomatoes just off the vines, or some tree-ripened peaches.

Generally though the canning factory can do a better and a cheaper job for the city family.

KADDERLY:

Canning factories are located as close as possible to the source of supply, within a short haul of the tomato fields, peach orchards, and berry patches. The growers pick and rush their products to the factories on schedule.

(over)

VAN DEMAN:

Which makes for good flavor and keeping quality in canned goods.

KADDERLY:

Not to mention catching the vitamins before they have a chance to get away.

VAN DEMAN:

Good. I'm glad you're guarding the vitamin front.

You're quite right. Fruits and vegetables do lose some of their vitamin values on standing. They lose some too when they're cut up and prepared for canning, and when they're heated to kill the bacteria.

KADDERLY:

Vitamin C is the one that's most temperamental, as I remember.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, it's especially sensitive to the combination of heat and air. But even so home-canned tomatoes, for instance, can still be one of the good wintertime sources of vitamin C.

KADDERLY:

In other words, you wouldn't advise anyone to lay off canning tomatoes from the home garden just because they lose some of their vitamin C in the process.

VAN DEMAN:

Most emphatically no. Tomatoes are one of the best and easiest of all vegetables to can at home.

KADDERLY:

And I'm sure the Bureau of Home Economics canning bulletin gives the best and easiest way to do it.

VAN DEMAN:

All its times and temperatures are backed up by laboratory tests. We can say that much.

There's been a regular epidemic lately of questions about canning peaches... tied up generally with processing the fruit in the oven.

KADDERLY:

That's an easy way, isn't it, if there's a heat control device on the oven?

VAN DEMAN:

Easy, but not so good in other ways. The canned peaches sometimes turn brown. .... So do apricots and pears processed in the oven.

KADDERLY:

What's the explanation?

VAN DEMAN:

An enzyme in the fruit is the Ethiopian in the wood pile. It works this way.

If the peaches are packed raw and cold into the glass jars, even though they're

filled up with boiling hot sirup, it takes quite a while for the heat of the oven to penetrate to the center of the jars.

So during this long slow heating, an enzyme in the peaches begins to act on certain substances in the fruit and make it turn brown. There's a lot of air in the tissues of cold-packed fruit, and that helps too in this oxidizing, discoloring process. And the browning keeps right on after the jars of peaches are taken out of the canner, cooled, and put into storage.

KADDERLY:

The moral is, then, better not can peaches, pears, apricots in the oven.

VAN DEMAN:

That's right. Better stick to the boiling-water bath. It gives better results. The brown discoloration doesn't really spoil the peaches, but they don't look very appetizing.

Our canning experts lean toward the hot pack, too, for most fruits and vegetables. By that they mean a short precook that softens the tissues, drives out the air, makes it possible to pack more solid food into each container. And the hot pack shortens the processing time in the canner. For peaches, for instance, it cuts the time to 15 minutes in the boiling-water bath as against 25 or 35 minutes when they're packed cold and raw.

KADDERLY:

Those figures are given in your printed timetable of course. So nobody need try to remember them now.

VAN DEMAN:

My no. No home canner trusts to her memory on times and temperatures for processing all the 49 different foods.

KADDERLY:

Unless she's a wizard with figures.

VAN DEMAN:

Even then she'd be safer to use the wizardry in some other direction. Five minutes off in processing time may mean a lot of spoiled food.

KADDERLY:

Well, every home canner certainly needs reliable timetables for processing the fruits and vegetables that grow on the home place.

So again, Farm and Home friends, we offer you the help of the U. S. Department of Agriculture on home canning, in the form of the free bulletin - "Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables, and Meats." If you would like a copy send your request to the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture. ---- Washington, D. C.

(ad libbed offer of Homemade Jams, Jellies and Preserves).

